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North East Forest Alliance

Media Release

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Old growth forest under attack as government winds back environmental protections

The Berejiklian government's plan to "remap" old growth forest poses serious new threat to some of the best mature forests left in NSW.

The government announced it would remap these high-value public native forests as part of a package of changes to forest protection laws (Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals) unveiled today.

Nature Conservation Council CEO Kate Smolski said: "Logging is not permitted in old-growth forests because these areas have exceptional value for conservation.

"Removing old-growth classification through the remapping project could make thousands of hectares of previously protected high-quality wildlife habitat available to the timber industry.

"This is a major attack on our native forests and the conservation movement will vigorously oppose these changes at every opportunity."

National Parks Association CEO Alix Goodwin said: "The government plans to weaken forest environmental protections come just weeks after it declared it would protect 24,000 hectares of koala habitat by reclassifying state forests for wildlife conservation.

"We have been told that new protections for koala habitat will result in an annual shortfall of 10,000 cubic metres of sawlogs promised to the timber industry.

"We are very concerned the remapping project will result in high-quality forest losing high levels of protection and being made available to the timber industry to make up for the timber lost through koala protection.

"The government appears to be forcing the community to choose between protecting koalas or old-growth forest when we should in fact protect both."

"Under the proposed arrangement, coastal forests between Grafton and Taree will be subject to a massive increase in harvesting intensity with patches of forest of 45ha open to clear felling.

"This is a new level of logging intensity not seen before outside of the Eden region on the south coast, where forests have been decimated to feed the woodchip mill."

Dailan Pugh, from the North East Forest Alliance said: "It is outrageous that the intent is to undertake a discredited review process to open up large areas of currently protected old-growth forest for logging on the north coast in order to meet a sawlog shortfall of 10,000 cubic metres per annum. Our wildlife cannot afford to lose any more of these precious remnants."

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